

Danesfort Dispatches

A Quarterly Newsletter from the U.S. Consulate General Belfast

January 2011



Vol. 6, Issue 1

Dear American Community,

I hope that you had a wonderful holiday season despite the travel and water disruptions of the Great Freeze and wish all a very Happy New Year!!

Autumn was busy for us. On October 19, Secretary of State Clinton hosted a one day U.S.- Northern Ireland Economic Conference in Washington, D.C. FM Peter Robinson and dFM Martin McGuinness, and other economic officials participated. Senior executives from U.S. firms that have operations in Northern Ireland and from U.S. companies that are actively considering investing also attended. Discussions centered on why U.S. firms chose to invest and what the target firms needed to see to consider a commitment. All the participants - both private sector and government - felt that the Conference provided very useful insights and connections. The Consulate continues to work closely with U.S. Economic Envoy Declan Kelly and Northern Ireland counterparts to support economic development.

As we are in the dark days of winter, I wanted to highlight the American artists who are participating in the Out to Lunch Arts Festival being held in various venues in the Cathedral Quarter, January 5-20, including Elizabeth Cook, Special Consensus, Madison Violet, The Henry Girls/Foxhunt, and Justin Townes Earle. We are again proud sponsors of the 7th Belfast-Nashville Songwriters Festival (February 23-27) and encourage everyone to check out the Festival's website, www.belfastnashville.com, to see the many talented musicians from across the U.S. and Northern Ireland who will be performing.

Finally, I would like to thank all who have signed up as fans of the Consulate Facebook page and urge all those who haven't signed up to consider it (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Consulate-Belfast/189796969657>). We hope the page provides a useful means of keeping in touch and hearing about our work.

Again, the entire Consulate team wishes you a healthy, happy and prosperous 2011!

Sincerely,

Kamala Lakhdhir, Consul General

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)



Millions of Americans travel abroad every year and encounter no difficulties. However, U.S.

embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident, or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency.

When an emergency happens, or if natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your foreign travel, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By informing us about your trip or residence abroad, you help the embassy or consulate locate you when you might need them the most.

Signing up is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security. For more information visit the Department of State website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

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Travel Tips from Department of State Blog



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Many of you will have your holiday travel behind you and be heading back to work and school routines. But here is some advice from the U.S. Department of State blog that applies to year around travel.

Is it too early to consider booking your summer holidays??

Sign your passport, and fill in the emergency information: Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport. Most passports are valid for ten years. Write the contact information in pencil so you can change it as needed over time.

Leave copies of itinerary, passport data page, and credit card: What happens if there's an emergency back home? Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends so you can be contacted in case of an emergency. Leave a copy of your credit card too; in an emergency, the credit card company can help your family locate you.

Check your overseas medical insurance coverage: Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance. Medical treatment and evacuations can cost thousands of dollars – some countries won't allow you in through customs unless you can show proof of medical insurance!

Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws: While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department travel.state.gov offers useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit. To avoid being a target of crime, practice the same safety tips you would in any place you aren't familiar with: do not wear clothing or jewelry that would attract attention and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

Contact us in an emergency: We are here to help you. Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the United States are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at <http://travel.state.gov>, or you can call the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747 (if calling from the U.S. or Canada), or 202-501-4444 (if calling from overseas).

Electronic System of Travel Authorization (ESTA)

Do your future travel plans include traveling with friends, family or colleagues who are not U.S. citizens? Visa Waiver Program (British and Irish citizens) travelers entering the United States by air or sea carrier are required to register under the Electronic System for Travel Authorization at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/>. Before attempting to register under ESTA, please first [check your eligibility to travel under the Visa Waiver Program](#).

For more information, visit the Embassy London website at <http://london.usembassy.gov/esta-info.html>.

What is Global Entry?

Global Entry is a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) program that allows expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Though intended for frequent international travelers, there is no minimum number of trips necessary to qualify for the program. Participants may enter the United States by using automated kiosks located at select airports

For more information visit the Department of Homeland Security Customs and Border Patrol Global Entry website at <http://www.globalentry.gov>.



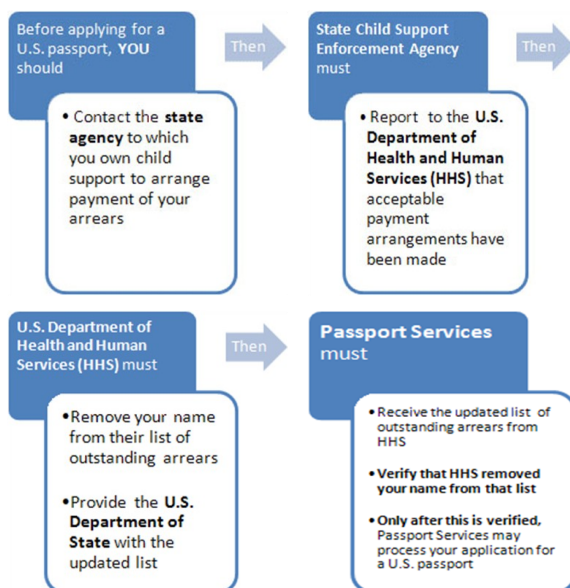
Spotlight : Child Support Payments and Getting a U.S. Passport

If you owe \$2,500 or more in child support, you are not eligible to receive a U.S. passport.

You should make arrangements to pay the [state](#) where child support is owed **BEFORE** you submit your application for a U.S. passport. All questions about your child support arrears or the status of a payment should be directed to the appropriate [state child support enforcement agency](#).

Once payment is arranged, it may take 2-3 weeks before Passport Services is permitted to process your application. See details of this process in the chart below:

State Child Support Chart For Obtaining Your U.S. Passport



IMPORTANT NOTES:

Passport Services has no information concerning individuals' child support obligations and has no authority to take action until HHS removes your name from its list. All of the above information is detailed in **Section 51.70 (a) (8) of Title 22 of the Code of Federal Regulations**.

For more information on this and other family and passport topics visit the Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov/passport/ppi/family/family_869.html

Social Security News

The Social Security Administration advises all those who are going to be filing for their social security benefits to be sure to do so well in advance of their respective age-appropriate birthdays. The process of applying for benefits can sometimes be time-consuming, so the sooner the paperwork is in, the better.

For clarification on filing requirements and contact information for the Federal Benefits Unit at the U.S. Embassy in London, visit http://london.usembassy.gov/cons_new/acs/fbu/index.html.



Alternatively, you can phone them at 0207 499 9000, ext 2926 or 2927.

Redesigned Consular Report of Birth Abroad Certificate



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The Department of State is pleased to announce the introduction of a redesigned Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA, or Form FS-240). The redesigned CRBA, which is an official record confirming that a child born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent or parents acquired U.S. citizenship at birth and serves as proof of citizenship, has been updated with a variety of state-of-the-art security features to help prevent fraud and identity theft.

Beginning January 18, 2011, overseas posts will still document the citizenship of children born overseas to U.S.-citizen parents, but the CRBAs will be printed at our passport agencies in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and New Orleans, Louisiana, using the information provided by overseas posts. By centralizing production and eliminating the distribution of controlled blank stock throughout the world, we will help ensure uniform quality and lessen the possibility of fraud. Additionally, the Department will no longer issue the DS-1350 Certification of Report of Birth Abroad. Instead, the Department will simply provide new FS-240s in response to requests for additional, replacement, or amended CRBAs.

In order to upgrade our systems for this change, the U.S. Consulate General Belfast is suspending CRBA appointments from January 1 through January 18, 2011. CRBA applications submitted during that time will be adjudicated after January 18.



Ulster American Women's Club

Announcement from the Ulster American Women's Club:

The Ulster American Women's Club (UAWC) has recently regrouped and begun meeting once again. At this time, we are meeting monthly on the 3rd or 4th Wednesday of each month. It doesn't matter if you've been here 2 months or 20 years, living here short-term or permanently, we welcome you to connect with other American women and explore this wonderful land and culture in which we live.

Our tentative activities for the coming months include: January 19th-Irish Linen Centre in Lisburn; February 23rd-Potluck Luncheon at a member's home in Belfast; and March 23rd-The Braid Museum &/or shopping in Ballymena.

If you are interested in receiving monthly emails with more detailed and up-to-date information on these and future activities, please contact Angie at apramann@gmail.com.

Job Announcement —U.S. Consulate General Belfast

Job Announcement: Information Management Assistant

Do you have:

- Two 'A' levels', a High School Diploma, plus one year of college, or an equivalent academic qualification?
- Progressively responsible work experience in the computing field, planning installations and maintaining computing equipment, software and networks; troubleshooting; installing PC hardware;
- Excellent knowledge of the MS Office suite of products.

For further information about the position and information on how to apply, please visit: <http://london.usembassy.gov/hrd/index.html>.

PLEASE NOTE, TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THIS POSITION, YOU MUST BE A U.S. CITIZEN, ELIGIBLE TO OBTAIN A TOP SECRET SECURITY CLEARANCE.

Culture Corner

The U.S. Consulate General occasionally provides partial grants for cultural events which have an American element. Some of the events are free, for others there is a charge. This quarter, we encourage you to check out:

Out to Lunch Music Festival 2011 - January 5 - 30, 2011 - The 38 Out to Lunch 2011 acts include the finest international talent and festival performers you'll find this side of OTL's "big sister", the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival. For more details and booking information go to <http://www.cqaf.com> or call 02890 244400.

Feile an Earragh Spring Traditional Festival - February 3-6, 2011 - This year's festival is set to be the highlight of the music calendar. Performances take place in Bank Square, Belfast City Centre's hub for traditional music. For more information visit <http://www.feilebelfast.com>.

7th Annual Belfast Nashville Songwriter Festival - February 23-27, 2011 - The festival continues to be a roaring success year upon year. This year's lineup is pretty impressive! Go to www.belfastnashville.com for more information on workshops, artists, venues and tickets.

Disclaimer: This listing of events, performances and other activities is for information purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Consulate General Belfast. All opinions expressed by the artists, writers, and performers participating or contributing to the events listed are those solely of the participants and contributors and not the U.S. Government or its designated representatives. Listing information is believed to be correct at the time it is listed but the U.S. Consulate General accepts no liability for subsequent changes to these details and no reliance should be placed upon them.

American Citizen Services: In the event of a genuine emergency involving a U.S. Citizen in Northern Ireland, our after-hours phone number is 07545 507738.

Consular Closure Dates

The U.S. Consulate General Belfast will be closed on the following dates:

Monday, January 17, 2011 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Monday, February 21, 2011 - President's Day
Thursday, March 17, 2011 - St. Patrick's Day
Friday, April 22, 2011 - Good Friday
Monday, April 25, 2011 - Easter Monday
Tuesday, April 26, 2011 - Easter Tuesday

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KIDS CORNER

Coloring Fun for St. Patrick's Day

HAPPY
SAINT PATRICK'S
DAY!

